

## Inclusive Education as a Concept of Social Inclusion or a Method of Assimilation?

The Greek case of “Frederica’s Children”.

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### **1 .Introduction**

*Inclusive education* emphasizes the importance of compensative operation of education. Focusing particularly on vulnerable and marginalized groups, *inclusive education* refers to “*the right of all learners to a quality education that meets basic learning needs and enriches lives*”<sup>1</sup>.

Consequently, *inclusive education* seeks to promote *social inclusion*, a very complex notion that suffers from a lack of shared understanding. As Fend indicates<sup>2</sup>, social psychology and sociology claim that “*the concept of social inclusion refers to the procedure of making somebody social, of adopting norms and values*”. Differently enough, in political terms, *social inclusion* is about how societies deal with “difference”. In this regard, *social inclusion* is “*understood as being part of a larger discourse about the politics of difference or identity politics, in which marginalized groups struggle to gain a role and a voice in political participation*”<sup>3</sup>. *Social inclusion* often encompasses the struggle of vulnerable and marginalized individuals and groups who are deprived of their right to education.

This paper, aiming at studying and evaluating a project of inclusive education at the late 60’s and early 70’s in Greece, focuses on the latter understanding of the notion “*social inclusion*”. Additionally, it examines if the particular project of inclusive education could also be evaluated as *assimilation*<sup>4</sup>, that is, on the one hand, the renunciation of participants’ rights of freedom of expression, and of cultural identity and, on the other hand, the systematic manipulation of conscience.

### **2. Historical Context**

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1 UNESCO (2008). *Inclusive Education: The Way Of The Future*, International Conference Centre, Geneva, November 2008

2 Fend, H. (1989). *Social Inclusion and Education* [In Greek], Athens:Kastaniotis, pp.14-15.

3 Grossman, L.D. (2008). “Democracy, citizenship education and inclusion: a multi-dimensional approach”, *Prospects*, March 2008, 38: 35–46.

4 Elinor, K. (2003). “Integration, Assimilation and Social Inclusion: questions of faith”, *Policy Futures in Education*, 1(4), pp. 686-698.

After the WWII, Greece had been ruled by vested interests. For Governors, one of the most crucial matters was to handle the consequences of the bloody Civil War. Northwest Greece was an area with special interest, as it held a multilingual, multicultural, drenched in blood population<sup>5</sup>, who were actively engaged in combats, supporting either the Government troops or the communist opponents. During that period, terms used by newspapers to describe the inhabitants of these regions had undergone a series of great transformations as a result of political fanaticism: “*heroes, patriots*” versus “*rats, [communist] bandits*”. All those elements were especially problematic to the reconstitution of the state, according to nationalistic point of view. Various institutions created and developed under the patronage of King Paul and Queen Frederica took action. Spearheading to foster loyalty and obedience, the Royal Family had appealed the emergent need for social justice to build up a many-faceted endeavor, which was propagated as a unique example in social charity. Some aspects of this example were: Rural Youth Centers, ‘Handicrafts’, ‘Pedopolis’, Boarding Schools for vulnerable children.

In this context, it was the 60’s decade, when a total amount of approximately 300 children of disadvantage families in northwest Greece, well known today as “Frederica’s Children”, was gradually chosen to take part in a peculiar program of educational inclusion. Royal Institutions attempted to organize and carry out an educational program for excellent but vulnerable pupils, who were selected to study in secondary education as boarders at Kefalonia and Crete, far away from their homes. The program should prevent disadvantage, if students were given opportunities for boarding education, for personal leadership and social and economic growth<sup>6</sup>. As it is indicated in a relevant document, “*an effective socialization process would aim to create patriots who would understand the magnificence of Greek-Christian civilization, speak a common language, reflect good character and civic virtue, and seek personal socioeconomic success*”

### **3. The survey**

The survey aimed at identifying and evaluating the attitudes of “Frederica’s Children” in order to better understand whether that particular experiment of inclusive

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5 Laurie K. H. (1999). “Culture, Civilization, and Demarcation at the Northwest Borders of Greece” *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (Feb., 1999), pp. 196-220

6 Andreou, A., Iliadou, S., Betsas, I. (2008). “From ‘Child Gathering’ to Royal ‘Child Fosterage’: Postwar Sights of Social Justice in Northern Greece”, *5th Scientific Conference in History of Education: «Education And Social Justice»* [In Greek], Conference & Cultural Centre of the University of Patras, 4-5 October 2008.

education: (a) is considered to have particular impacts on social mobilization and political socialization, (b) is evaluated as a process of educational and social inclusion or assimilation, (c) is considered pertaining to particular skills and competencies.

### **3.1. Methodology**

Semi-structured interviews were used as the basic instrument for conducting this survey. The interview questionnaire consisted of 38 questions. The vast majority of questions were designed in closed form so that specific responses would be obtained from the highest number of respondents. Moreover, the last two questions were designed in open form, so that they will give more extended qualitative data<sup>7</sup>.

### **3.2. Data analysis**

The total amount of the 37 interviewees determined that data derived from the questionnaires should be analyzed by using descriptive statistics. Frequencies, percentages, means, distributions, are used to describe the basic features of the data in the study.

Data derived from the two open questions were undergone the procedure of quantitative and qualitative content analysis. Data were organized by question to look across all respondents and their answers in order to identify consistencies and differences<sup>8</sup>. Identified themes were organized into coherent categories that are interpreted and conceptualized as it is presented here below.

### **3.3. Data**

#### **3.3.1. Demographic Data of the participants.**

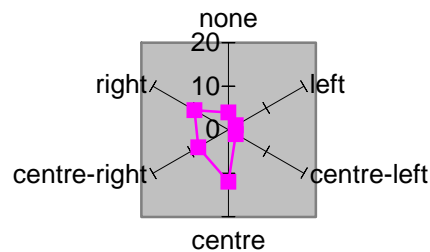
An overwhelming majority of the participants was slavic-speaking native population. The minority of the participants was speaking (in addition to standard Greek) Aromanian (Vlach), a Pontic dialect of Greek and a dialect of Albanian (Arvanitika). Their families' size ranged from 3 to 12 members. The adult members were mainly occupied in agricultural economy as farmers, stock-breeders and fishermen. However, assessing the economic status of their families, participants claimed that the household income was equidistributed among good, tolerable, low and extremely low.

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7 Bradburn, N.M., S., Sudman (1979). *Improving Interview Method And Questionnaire Design: Response Effects To Threatening Questions In Survey Research*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

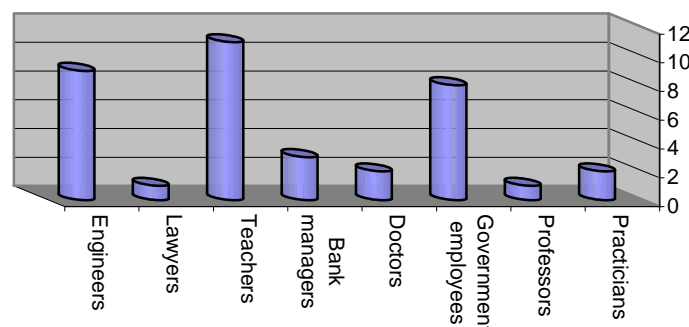
8 Krippendorff, K. (2004). *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

As figure 1 indicates, political choice of participants' families were distributed through a wide spectrum. Surprisingly enough, there was only 11% choosing the left and centre-left parties.



**Figure 1 Political choices of participants' families**

Data based on questions asked about participants' present household, such as income, education level, occupation (Figure 2), brings out a reality of social and economic mobility. The degree to which those children in 60's enhanced their social and economic status through the system of social hierarchy and stratification is impressive.



**Figure 2 Occupations of "Frederica's Children"**

### 3.3.2. Criteria for the Choice

Potential criteria for the choice of the children for participating in the particular program of educational inclusion were examined. Participants were requested to define the significance of the criteria for their choice from a list of six: (1= most important, 6= least important). Empirical results supported that 'School performance' was rated as first priority (25,4%). Moreover, the participants were very sensitive to 'socioeconomic criteria', (18,7% of the total sample ranked poverty as first priority), and to 'origin', (16,6% of the participants ranked it first and 22,7% second). However,

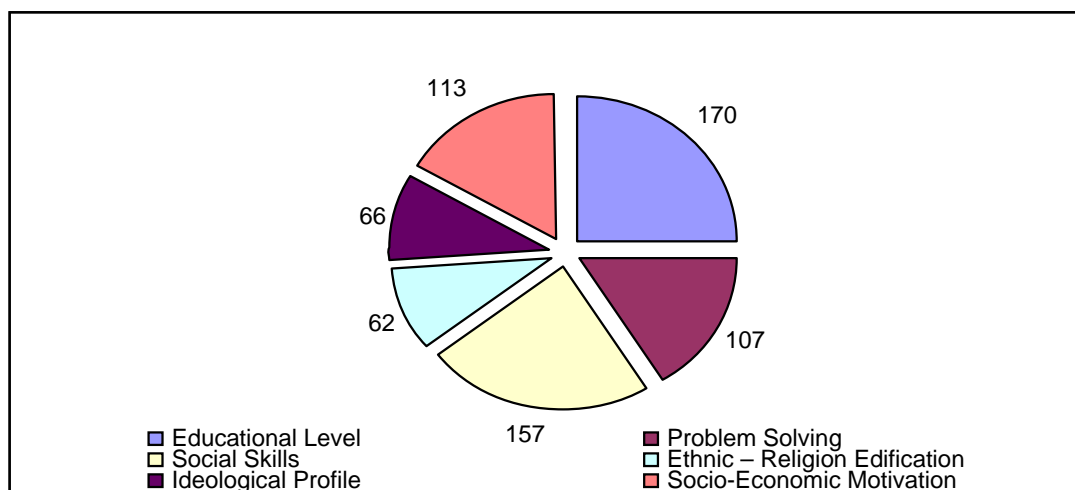
they seemed to rank low ‘linguistic behavior’ and they showed little interest in expanding ‘family’s ideology’ and ‘suspicion of loose national consciousness’.

### 3.3.3. *The syllabus of the boarding schools*

The majority of the participants declared their satisfaction in regard to the syllabus of the boarding schools they studied among other native children of Kefalonia or Crete, focusing on some extremely positive aspects such as discipline, organization of the courses and the institute, flexibility of the possible directions they could choose (technical, vocational, classical), existence of compensatory teaching.

### 3.3.4. *Skills, Attributes and Attitudes*

Likert scale<sup>9</sup> was used to measure respondents' assessment by asking the extent to which they agree or disagree with statements involving the development/acquisition of skills, attributes and attitudes throughout their educational experience. Relevant categories were: educational level, problem solving, social skills, ethnic-religion edification, ideological profile, socio-economic motivation. Respondents supported that their participation in the programme affected primarily their “educational level”, “social skills”, “socio-economic motivation” and skills involving “problem solving”. It is noteworthy that they assessed as less significant, categories such as “ethnic–religion edification” and “ideological profile”.



**Figure 3 Statements about skills, attributes and attitudes. Likert Scale**

### 3.3.5. *Variables on socio-economic performance of the participants*

Rich insights into participant’s assessment and attitudes were provided through open questions, which complemented the findings involving content analysis. The data

<sup>9</sup> Mueller, D.J. (1986). *Measuring Social Attitudes: A Handbook for Researchers and Practitioners*, N.Y.:Teachers College Press.

about variables on socio-economic performance of the participants, after being coded, resulted into six themes, which were grouped into thirteen categories, classified into five subcategories (Table I).

COD	THEME	CATEGORY	SUBCATEGORY
111	ORGANIZATION (23)	Space Management (14)	According to basic needs (3), According to learning needs (11)
120		Time Management (9)	
210	MOTIVATION (11)	Self – Actualization (2)	
221		External Motives (9)	Creating of aspirations (5)
222			Residence in the boarding school (4)
310	INSTITUTION VALUES (46)	Collectiveness (19)	
320		Discipline (12)	
330		Emulation (7)	
340		Social Etiquette (3)	
350		Diligence (5)	
410	LEARNING ENVIRONMENT (12)	Compensatory Teaching (4)	
420		Level of Teachers (1)	
430		Level of Boarding Pupils (7)	
50	PERSONALITY OF BOARDING PUPILS (9)		
60	EFFECTIVENESS OF METHODS (17)		
Ref.	118		

**Table 1 Variables on socio-economic performance of the participants**

Most of the interviewees stressed the importance of “Institution Values”. “Organization”, “Effectiveness of Methods” and “Effectiveness of Methods” were following. A few interviewees mentioned the “Learning Environment”, “Motivation” and “Personality of boarding pupils” as variables on their socio-economic performance.

### *3.3.6. Total evaluation of the educational programme*

The vast majority of the interviewees evaluated the inclusive educational programme positively. Among 132 relevant references, 86 were positive and 46 negative. On the whole, the interviewees’ positive references (Table 2) revealed an assessment of social inclusion, which, furthermore, was supposed to be determinative for their life. Interviewees who expressed negative statements about their experience targeted their criticism on political tendentiousness of the programme, non-pedagogic treatment and family privation. Therefore, it seems that assimilation as a method of enculturation and manipulation of conscience was considered to have political and civic dimensions by few participants.

Positive Assessment		Negative Assessment	
Unclear	19	Unclear	7
Chances for Education	17	Non-pedagogic	8
Social Inclusion	14	Political tendentiousness	18
Induration	9	Family Privation	13
Experiences	6		
Skills	9		
Social Mobility	6		
Efficacy	6		
Refs 86		Refs 46	

**Table 2 Categories of Positive and Negative Assessment of the Educational Programme**

#### ***4. Interpretation - Concluding Remarks***

Through the interviews and their analysis rich and interesting information was collected on the participants' attitudes and evaluation concerning their common experience of the Royal inclusive education programme.

- The majority of the participants believed that their inclusive education experience constituted a process of challenge for the development of their educational level, knowledge and social skills. A process of reinforcement, which contributed to significant social and economic motivation. The “Attribution Theory of Motivation” describes how the individual's justification about self or others influences motivation<sup>10</sup>. Three dimensions are supposed to characterize success or failure: a.locus (internal vs. external), b.stability (do causes change over time or not?), c.controllability (causes one can control such as skills vs. causes one cannot control such as luck, others' actions, etc). The theory supports that all causes for success or failure could be categorized within these three dimensions in some way. This is because the dimensions affect expectancy and value. Surprisingly enough, according to the theory and the relevant data, the interviewees seem to relate their success to external factors (locus), which did not have any stability. This was supposed to be closely related to feelings of low self esteem and with few expectations about the future. However, controllability, connected to acquired skills and competences, seemed to be the major factor for succession and pride.
- The vast majority of the participants revealed an assessment of social inclusion vs. assimilation, concerning their educational experience. The inclusive dimension

<sup>10</sup> Kokkinaki, F. (2006). *Social Psychology* [In Greek], Athens:Typothito.

seems to be perceived as the improvement that is the remodeling of their manners and attitudes, which affected radically their lives.